

A
S E R M O N
Preached before the Right Honourable the
L O R D M A Y O R,
T H E
A L D E R M E N and C I T I Z E N S
O F
L O N D O N,

At the Cathedral Church of St. P A U L, on *Wed-*
nesday, November 5, 1746.

B Y
R O W L A N D S A N D I F O R D,
Lecturer of St. *Bartholomew* near the *Exchange*, and Chaplain
to the Right Honourable the L O R D M A Y O R.

Published at the Request of the L O R D M A Y O R and Court
of A L D E R M E N.

L O N D O N,
Printed for J. CLARKE, under the *Royal Exchange*, *Cornhill*.
M D C C X L V I.



BENN Mayor.

The first Court held on Tuesday the 11th day of November, 1746, and in the twentieth Year of the Reign of King George the second of Great Britain, &c.

IT is ordered, that the Thanks of this Court, be given to the Reverend Mr. *Sandiford*, Chaplain to the Right Honourable the LORD MAYOR; for his Sermon, preached before this Court and the Liveries of the several Companies of this City, at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, on *Wednesday* the fifth Instant, and that he be desired to print the same.

M A N.



To the Right Honourable
WILLIAM BENN, Esq;
LORD MAYOR of the City of LONDON,
And the Worshipful
COURT of ALDERMEN,
T H I S
S E R M O N,

Made Publick at their Request,
Is with all Duty and Gratitude dedicated

B Y

their much oblig'd

humble Servant,

ROWLAND SANDIFORD.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

CHICAGO, ILL.

DANIEL iv. 27.

Let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthning of thy tranquillity.

THIS advice, or counsel, was given to *Nebuchadnezzar* by the prophet *Daniel*, after he had interpreted the king's dream; in which the Almighty's intention to humble the pride and haughtiness of his heart was represented by the destruction of a flourishing tree; whose leaves were fair, whose fruit was plentiful, and the expansion of whose boughs afforded a pleasant shade to the beasts of the field; and yet though such were its kindly influences, though it was agreeable to the sight, delightful to the taste, and pleasant for its shade, still it was to be hewn down and destroyed; hereby, as the prophet observes, affording a most serviceable Lesson to the proud and lofty in heart,
to

to those, who imagine, that by the strength of their own arm they get themselves the victory, or who do not acknowledge, that it is the most High, who ruleth over the kingdoms of the earth.

This was *Nebuchadnezzar's* unhappy case; and therefore as this then flourishing tree was to be destroyed, and only the root to remain in the earth; so he, who was then powerful and strong, whose greatness had elevated him with aspiring thoughts, and whose largeness of dominion had so far increased his pride, as to create a forgetfulness of that God, who made him, was in like manner to be chastised for his arrogancy and presumption. This tree was not entirely to be rooted up; neither his kingdom to be utterly taken from him, but reserved, till reason restored him to a sense of his duty, or till he should confess, that it was his great Creator, who ruled in *Jacob* and unto the ends of the world. To promote which, as well as that his prosperity might be continued, the prophet adds his advice, which was, immediately to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. “ Let my counsel, says he, be now
“ in

“ in this extremity acceptable unto thee, and
 “ break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine
 “ iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor ;” this
 is the way to obtain mercy for thy faults, pardon
 for thy sins, and forgiveness for thine iniquities;
 and in course the lengthning of thy tranquillity.

How seasonable this admonition was, every one, that consults that prophecy, will easily perceive; and how applicable it may be at this present time, a serious attention will evince. For though we are assembled here to return thanks to Almighty God for a most surprizing deliverance of this nation; still that our thankfulness may be sincere, and that our praises may not be a mere flattering with our lips; it will not be improper to reflect, whether our * “ hearts are whole with him, or whether we continue stedfast in his covenant:” this ought to be our first employment, and such an employment, as (I am afraid) will render the text too applicable to most in these days. For what man is there, that hath not offended his great Creator? Does not experience shew,

* Psalm lxxviii. 37.

that

that too many with the bold Assyrian boast of their own strength and wisdom; that too many publickly blaspheme the God, that gave them Being; reject his holy word and ordinances; deny the only Saviour of the world; scoff at his religion; and with rashness fly in the face of heaven? Does not a flood of impiety and prophaneness overflow the kingdom? Have not errors and heresies been daily broached to the detriment of that pure and reformed religion established in this land? And though even the gates of hell have not prevailed against it; yet have not malicious arrows been shot from the bow of the scornful? While others have not been wanting, whose hands were imbrued in blood, whose thirst was after gain, and whose lives were a continual series of extortions, cruelties and oppressions of the poor. Former ages abounded with hypocrisy and dissimulation, which were as cloaks to cover their vices; but now the veil is thrown off, and scoffers walking after their own lusts, publickly appear in our streets, so openly, that it highly concerns us to check this torrent, to remember from whence we are fallen, and to repent.

repent ; lest the “ * Almighty should visit for
 “ such offences, and lest his soul should be aveng-
 “ ed on such a nation as this.”

This ought to be our first work ; here we are to begin ; or else how can we implore the divine Providence to lengthen our tranquillity, and mercifully to interpose for our deliverance, as he hath so signally done in former times, of which the commemoration of this day is an instance ?

Since then the confessing and forsaking of our sins are an introduction to thanksgiving ; since they are of so great importance to our future prosperity, I think, I shall not deviate from my duty, if I should employ some few minutes in more particularly considering the text. In exciting your gratitude to Almighty God for that signal act of providence accomplished in the beginning of the last century, and appointed for the annual solemnity of this day.

Now the text points out to us the necessity of an unfeigned repentance, of discarding our most beloved vices, and of so changing our desires and affections as to become new creatures. Not only the commission is to be avoided,

* Jer. v. 9.

but even the love of sin is to be rooted out: for if the least fibre remains, we may indeed have the form, but not the power of godliness. If a change of manners is thus effected, and our duty performed with delight and inclination, happy will be the conversion: for then it will be grounded on the most lasting principle, our natural disposition: whereas if we act against nature, great difficulties will ensue, and the danger of a relapse may hourly be expected; for that like a bended bow will retain its elastick power, and endeavour at all hazards to return to its former situation. Thus it is necessary to have a new heart and a new spirit to become new creatures; to begin our repentance in our thoughts and resolutions, and then to perfect it in our works and actions.

A powerful motive to this will be a strong persuasion of the goodness of our great Creator, a lively hope in his mercy, and a steady faith in the merits of our Blessed Saviour; for the hope in Divine Mercy, and a lively faith in the satisfaction of our Redeemer are the life, and absolutely essential to the quickening of true repentance. And though all the systems of morality have been dressed in the gayest feathers,

[II]

thers, yet their beauty has been soon faded, unless an orthodox faith was the ground of their colours. Faith without works is lifeless, and works without ^{faith} are insufficient for our salvation; * “ we being accounted righteous before “ God, not for our own works or deservings, “ but for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Je- “ sus Christ.” This then will be a true christian repentance, and this will be a real breaking off our sins by righteousness: for such an orthodox faith and careless living are absurdities, are so inconsistent, that we may as well suppose the greatest harmony between things, which are the most diametrically opposite, as that these can be united.

Let no man then presume, that his repentance is real, when he either perseveres in evil actions, or encourages infidelity in himself or others; but let him shew the fruits of his faith by his works, by his universal obedience, and more particularly in the instance, which the Prophet gives us in the text, by shewing mercy to the poor.

Which advice is entirely consonant to the directions of our excellent Church-Catechism, where-

* Article II.

in before we approach God's sacred altar, we are directed " to examine ourselves, whether we
 " repent truly of our former sins, whether we
 " have a lively faith in God's mercies through
 " Christ, and whether we are in charity with
 " all men:" and since the Almighty will not accept our offering at his table without being in charity with our brethren; no wonder the Prophet so particularly advises us to shew mercy to the poor. Without this our obedience cannot be sincere; " for * love is the fulfilling of the law." Universal love is the most powerful principle of universal obedience, and all the most particular precepts of our duty are but so many genuine effects and proper expressions of it. For what are the effects of love, but the seeking of the satisfaction of the person beloved, the behaving ourselves in such a manner as not to offend, and the being forward in all such services as afford pleasure and content? Kind words and tender expressions, unless accompanied with works of kindness and tenderness, are useless love, and will be attended with no advantage either to ourselves or brethren; and therefore if the stain of our iniquities is to be washed away by mercy,

* Rom. xiii. 10.

it should exert itself on all occasions, and rejoice in pitying the miserable, in protecting the oppressed, in relieving the indigent, in giving counsel to the ignorant, in encouraging the good, and in forgiving of injuries and wrongs. These are the most noble instances of doing good, and such as have the promise of very great rewards; no less than success in our undertakings, the lengthning of our tranquillity, the protection from danger, and the deliverance from evil; and if these promises have not a proper efficacy, surely the heart must be lost to all sense of humanity and religion. “ * Remember therefore those that are in bonds, and those that suffer adversity :” “ † Deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, and do no wrong to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow ; neither shed innocent blood :” “ But ‡ execute true judgment and righteousness ; and shew mercy and compassion to your brother :” For consider our welfare depends upon such proceedings, it being declared in the sacred scripture, “ that ** he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy.”

* Heb. xiii. 3. † Jer. xxii. 3. ‡ Zec. vii. 9. ** Jam. ii. 13.

If then our hearts are not whole with God, if we continue not steadfast in his covenant, and keep not his testimonies, vain will be our thanksgiving, and like the *Israelites*, we shall provoke him to displeasure by thus tempting and dissembling with our tongues. But if we are thus prepared, if our hearts are thus cleansed by repentance, then may we draw near boldly to the throne of Grace, and there offer our joyful tribute of praise and thanksgiving. Our hearts being thus warmed with the most affectionate zeal, and our tongues being full of the most unfeigned joy, will enquire with the Psalmist, “* what
“ reward should be rendered to the Lord for all
“ his benefits, and what sacrifice will be most
“ pleasing in his sight?” Such a zeal will direct us “† to enter into his gates with thank-
“ giving, and to go into his courts with praise;”
“ ‡ not to hide his righteousness within our hearts,
“ or to keep back his mercy and truth from the
“ great congregation.” It would be disingenuous not to speak good of his name, or not
“ ** to pay our vows in the presence of all his
“ people:” for as it is our meet, right, and bounden duty at all times and in all places to give thanks unto the Lord, so when the mercies

* Psalm cxvi. 11.

† Ps. c. 4.

‡ Ps. xl. 9, 10.

** Ps. cxvi. 14.

acknowledged are not particular, but general, are not confined to private persons, but signally extended to the public, then our closets will be too narrow for such returns of gratitude, and God's house the most proper place to set forth his most worthy praise. National blessings certainly require national acknowledgments; and therefore when any such are conferred, the behaviour of the children of *Israel* on such occasions should teach us to present our solemn addresses publicly to the almighty Bestower; "for * who so thus
 " offers him thanks and praise, he honours him,
 " and for thus ordering his conversation right,
 " will the salvation of God be shewn."

By this we confess him to be the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, that from him all blessings have been and are daily received, and that all public as well as private prosperity is derived from his goodness: and though his divine nature is so far exalted as not to admit of any additional lustre from frail mortality; though the glory of his name is so great as far to outshine all blessing and praise; yet the magnifying of his liberality, and the generously confessing of his goodness, are neither below the divine

* Psalm l. 23.

attributes,

attributes, nor unbecoming the tongues of men. Since every thing we enjoy is a free gift, since our iniquities are so great as to have no title or claim to such mercies, so our silence would be a proof of our ingratitude, and would be injustice to our great Benefactor. The pleasure of doing good is certainly very great, and, when free from any sinister views, will receive no increase by any returns ; but still the obligation is the same on the persons thus favoured, and a forgetfulness would not only be a plain indication of a degenerate mind, but is directly contrary to all the precepts of the christian religion.

The pleasantness of this duty appears in the very exercise of it. Human nature is too apt to be startled on the recollection of our past misconduct, will recoil at such melancholy thoughts, and will for present ease postpone the most necessary duties : whereas this is free from all such storms, and our minds calmed with the most pleasing ideas ; here is no mixture of regret ; nothing but the bright part of our lives is represented, and the enjoyment of those things, for which we have most ardently wished, is repeated : in short, a sensible delight always attends the exercise of this, and our happiness

pinels is renewed, whenever our memories are refreshed with such pleasing remembrances.

Nay not only past mercies are thought on with satisfaction, but even the agreeable prospect of future is laid open to our sight. For what can more strongly recommend subsequent favours, than a proof of the former being not only well bestowed, but even so used as to produce a plentiful increase? whereas if the soil is barren or unthankful; if the good seeds are chok'd with weeds; is it not natural to imagine, that some other ground of a more kindly disposition will be sought for and enriched? especially when He, from whom every good and every perfect gift cometh, has declared by his Blessed Son Jesus Christ, “ * that to him, that hath, shall be given, “ and he shall have more abundance, but from “ him that hath not, shall be taken away, even “ that he hath.” So that instead of these favours being any advantage to such receivers, they will be snares, “ and † those very things which “ were given or should have been for their “ wealth, will become an occasion of falling; “ as their eyes are thus blinded, that they see “ not, so now future mercies are withdrawn,

* Matt. xiii. 12.

† Psalm lxix. 23, 24.

“ and their backs are ever bowed down.” These are the dismal effects of ingratitude ; such, that at the very hearing the ear must tingle, and the mind be filled with the greatest horror and indignation : “ * Consider this therefore, ye that “ forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there “ be none to deliver you :” Let experience rebuke your unthankfulness ; and as every day brings variety of blessings, so let these at every night be the subject of your gratitude.

To enumerate all the particular blessings of divine Providence is beyond the compass of a human pen ; these are so extensive, that every moment affords a pleasing theme, as well as points out a lesson for our acknowledgments. His goodness enlightens the darkest corners of the world, and refreshes the most distant climates with the kindly warmth of its beams. “ In him † all “ things live, move, and have their beings,” and without his daily preservation they would return to their primitive state, and moulder into dust, their original composition. But though this is so copious a subject, yet there are some acts of Providence, that more particularly merit reiterated and redoubled praise, and such are those

* Ps. l. 22.

† Acts xvii. 28.

we are this day commemorating: the preserving a whole Nation from ruin, the recovering it from the jaws of death, and the rescuing its Religion from extreme danger are such signal marks of divine Favour, as ought to be solemnized with joy by all the sincere Lovers of our Jerusalem.

They were beyond the depth of a finite capacity to fathom, and of so destructive an influence (if attended with success) that the records of ancient times cannot produce a parallel, nor even future ages contrive an adequate one: to be thus delivered surely was a miraculous mercy, and as it was a work of God, so it ought to be had in remembrance, and this day preserved sacred, as a proof of the whole kingdom being truly mindful of such a merciful dispensation.

“ * Shew yourselves therefore joyful, all ye
“ Lands; sing, rejoice and give thanks:” “ † stand
“ up on this Day, and bless the Lord your
“ God:” “ ‡ Let the voice of joy and mirth be
“ heard in your dwellings; and let your tongues
“ publicly declare in the congregation of God’s
“ people, that the right hand of the Lord hath

* Ps. xcvi. 5.

† Nehem. ix. 5.

‡ Ps. cxviii. 15, 16, 17.

“ the

“ the pre-eminence, and hath brought mighty
 “ things to pass ; that we shall not die but
 “ live, the Almighty having ransomed us from
 “ the power of death,” through the mediation
 of his Blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ ; To
 whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be
 all honour and glory, now, henceforth and for
 evermore. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



